

Strep Throat

What is strep throat?

Strep throat is a contagious infection of the throat and tonsils caused by streptococcal bacteria. It can occur at any age, but is most prevalent among school-aged children.

How is strep throat spread?

The bacteria are easily spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes droplets into the air and another person inhales them. The bacteria may also be spread if a person touches infected droplets and then touches their mouth or nose.

What are the symptoms of strep throat?

It usually takes 1-3 days for symptoms to develop after being exposed to the bacteria. Symptoms may include the sudden onset of fever, sore, reddened throat, headache, painful swallowing, rash, stomach pain, fatigue, and enlarged lymph nodes in the neck. Vomiting may occur, especially in younger children.

What is the treatment for strep throat?

Children who show signs of strep throat should be sent home and seen by a physician for testing and proper treatment. Strep infection is usually treated with antibiotics. If antibiotics are prescribed, have your child take all of the medicine as directed, even if they feel better.

Call your child's school or day care to notify them that your child had been diagnosed with strep throat. Your child should stay home from school or day care until 24 hours after beginning antibiotic medication and the fever has gone away.

What can I do to make a sore throat feel better?

- Take ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Children and teens should not take aspirin.
- Adults and older children can suck on throat lozenges or ice chips.
- Eat soft foods, drink cool drinks or warm liquids, or suck on popsicles.
- Gargle with a salt water mixture (1/4 teaspoon of salt dissolved in 8 ounces of warm water).

Are there complications from strep throat?

If not treated, strep infection can lead to serious complications such as scarlet fever (characterized by a rash); rheumatic fever (a serious condition that affects the heart, joints, nervous system and skin); skin, bloodstream, and ear infections; inflammation of the kidneys; and pneumonia.

How can strep throat be prevented?

- Use tissues to catch coughs and sneezes and throw used tissues into the trash.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after wiping or blowing your nose, coughing, and sneezing.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water before preparing food or eating.
- Teach your children to wash their hands with soap and water after coughing or sneezing or before eating.
- Teach your children not to share eating utensils or cups with other children.

How do I get more information on strep throat?

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: (269) 969-6383

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Web Site: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/groupastreptococcal_g.htm

Web Site: <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/antibiotic-use/URI/sore-throat.html>

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This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.

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